

FWP R2 CAC Meeting

MEETING DATE: Thursday, Dec. 4, 2014
LOCATION: 3201 Spurgin Road, Missoula
TIME: 6-9:30 p.m.

In Attendance:

Members:: Tim Aldrich, Brian Bidlake, Louie Bouma, Steve Clevidence, Todd Frank, Charlie Johnson, Ross Keogh, Denley Loge, Tracy Manley, Jim Olson, Kylie Paul, Thomas Puchlerz, Carey Schmidt, Toby Walrath, Barbara Joanne Weimer

Staff: Randy Arnold, Liz Bradley, Chet Crowser, Vivaca Crowser, Molly Hensen, Rebecca Mowry, Pat Saffel, Dori Schiele & Mike Thompson

Commissioner: Gary Wolfe

Upcoming legislative session

Regional Supervisor, Randy Arnold, reviewed FWP's legislative proposals for the 2015 session, including the hunting & fishing license fee increase proposal. FWP tracks bills and updates online, and CAC members can find a link to this info at fwp.mt.gov beginning Jan. 5.

FWP R2 will host a legislative open house on Thursday, Dec. 18 from 6-8 p.m. at the Missoula FWP office.

Tim Aldrich will also be tracking FWP-related bills during the session and offered to send updates by email to CAC members. He passed around a sign-up sheet to CAC members to select whether they were interested in his updates.

Wildlife—hunting season recap, introduction of new biologists:

R2 Wildlife Manager, Mike Thompson, gave a presentation on 2014 Region 2 check station hunter numbers and harvest data, mostly focused on the Bitterroot Valley (Darby check station). He discussed how the Darby station operated on weekends-only for the first time this season. Continuous operation was needed when hunting seasons were closed when a harvest quota was reached, but FWP no longer manages hunting seasons on a harvest quota in Region 2.

Thompson showed some adjusted data from past years to compare harvest. Weekends-only elk harvest was almost the same in 2013 and 2014. White-tailed deer harvest was up and mule deer harvest was down slightly, compared with 2013.

On other wildlife-related topics, Kylie asked if FWP and MDT are reconciling their counts of road-killed wildlife and collecting as much data as possible, now that the public may retrieve road kills. Denley and Randy led a brainstorm about how this could be accomplished.

Mike also introduced the three new wildlife biologists for Region 2. Liz Bradley & Rebecca Mowry were in attendance and also gave a brief, personal welcome to the CAC. The following is a brief background on each new biologist:

- Missoula-based, vacated by Vickie Edwards—**Liz Bradley** comes to this new position after ten years with FWP in the wolf program. Liz brings a proven track record of expertise, relationships and professionalism to the task of managing all wildlife and their habitats in the most densely populated (by wolves and people) biologist district in Region 2.
- Blackfoot-based, vacated by Jay Kolbe—**Scott Eggeman** made the move from Five Valleys Land Trust. Prior to that, Scott developed relationships with landowners in the Blackfoot and Swan valleys as an employee of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. His biological credentials include landmark work on migratory and resident elk of the Ya Ha Tinda herd, in Alberta.
- Bitterroot-based, vacated by Nathan Borg—**Rebecca Mowry** comes to this position from Texas Parks and Wildlife, where she has served as a wildlife biologist for a little over a year. Rebecca obtained her Masters degree from the University of Missouri, where she studied river otter populations. Equally importantly, we have come to know Rebecca by way of her interview and reference checks as someone who will thrive in an environment where our wildlife resources are the subject of intense public passion.

Fisheries—Browns Lake, Blackfoot River Corridor, river recreation:

R2 Fisheries Manager, Pat Saffel, provided several Region 2 fisheries updates including a summary of FWP's Browns Lake Fishing Access Site and options for maintaining the lease on the site.

He also discussed the Blackfoot River Corridor Agreement. The agreement is up for renewal, and the renewal process will include a working group and additional public input process. CAC member, Todd Frank, is part of the working group.

Pat also provided a brief update on FWP's river recreation program, including how it is funded and managed. Pat suggested that since Ross and several others on the CAC are interested in this topic, a future CAC meeting (or subcommittee) might be dedicated to the river recreation topic.

And lastly, Commissioner Wolfe reminded CAC members that the fishing regulations are reviewed and set every four years, and 2015 is the year to do this. Pat described the public input timeline—including scoping beginning in March. He will keep CAC members updated on how to be involved.

State Parks—current news & projects:

R2 State Parks Manager, Chet Crowser, provided background on the State Park system including history, highlights, funding mechanisms, goals and challenges. Montana State Parks celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2014. Visitation in the state park system was over 2.1 million in 2013, up five percent from 2012 and up 28% from the 10-Year Trend (2004 to 2013).

The largest single funding source for State Parks in the \$6 vehicle registration fee. Residents that do not “opt-out” of paying this fee can visit any Montana state park without additional entrance fees.

State Parks is wrapping up a strategic planning process to craft an updated vision for the State

Parks system and Parks Division recreation programs for the next 5 years. The most recent strategic plan was created in 1998. Chet highlighted some of the key items that came out of the planning process and talked about how these items may impact management decisions in the future.

Round robin discussion:

The committee spent the last hour of the meeting discussing various topics of interest brought forward by CAC members.

Topics included:

- Projected delisting timeline for grizzly bears in the NCDE.
- Elk management, including how to prevent “shoot-out” scenarios on private property.
- Landowner relations—including FWP’s plans to replace Joe Weigand (former private lands wildlife specialist) after his recent move to MDT.
- Trespassing & stricter penalties for repeated offenses
- CAC member involvement in the legislative session
- Perceived pressure and need for FWP to look more broadly in regards to what it does, how it communicates and how it is funded.
- FWP internships & work study positions.

CAC Subcommittees:

Access subcommittee- Tim Aldrich

The committee met two times over the summer months and will get together in January. The group is focused on local/regional solutions to access issues.

Membership: Tim Aldrich, Brian Bidlake, Steve Clevidence, Dan Conn, Todd Frank, Charlie Johnson, Denley Loge, Tracy Manley, Greg Price, Tom Puchlerz & Carey Schmidt. **Next meeting date:** Tuesday, Jan. 13, 6-8pm @ the FWP Missoula office. Dinner provided.

Trapping subcommittee- Toby Walrath

The committee met one time over the summer and determined that Toby will offer a demonstration on trapping to give the group a common starting point for discussion on trapping I&E efforts that are needed. **Membership:** Brian Bidlake, Theresa Mondale, Kylie Paul, Greg Price, Toby Walrath. **Next meeting date:** Early February. Vivaca will send out a notice when the exact date and time has been set.

Next meeting

Tuesday, Feb. 10, 6 pm, at the Missoula FWP office (3201 Spurgin Rd)